

Remarks

Reconsideration of the rejection of claims 1 through 39 and 54 of the subject application respectfully is requested in view of the following additional comments.

Each of claims 1 through 27 and 54 recites a link provided with a bolt having threaded end portions and a pair of upset portions spaced inwardly relative to the threaded end portions, and a pair of inner grommets mountable on such bolt and each having a portion functional to snap-fit on one of the upset portions of the bolt when the grommet is mounted on the bolt. It is submitted that such structure is neither disclosed nor taught in any of the cited references and particularly the patent to Hardy, Jr., et al principally relied upon as a disclosure of such structure. As previously indicated, Hardy, Jr., et al neither discloses nor teaches a bolt having upset portions onto which grommets formed of a resilient material may be snap-fit. Instead, Hardy discloses a link 112 having no upset portions spaced from the ends thereof onto which grommets may be snap-fit, and alternatively and distinguishably discloses the use of a spool 124 having annular flange portions 126 and 128 provided on the ends thereof which may be placed onto bolt 112 with the bolt extending through the axial opening therein, as shown in Figure 3 of Hardy, Jr., to permit inner grommets 138 and 140 also to be slipped onto bolt 112 and mounted onto annular flange portions 126 and 128 of spool 122. In essence, Hardy, Jr., et al utilizes a separate component from the bolt, i.e., spool 122, to space and retain inner grommets 138 and 140. Such structure is clearly distinguishable from the claimed structure which utilizes merely upset portions of a bolt to space and retain a pair of inner grommets. That spool is 122 is a component separate from bolt 116 is clearly indicated in the exploded relation of the parts shown in Figure 4, the spacing of spool 122 from bolt 116 indicated by the broken away portion in Figure 3 and the assembly description indicated in column 6, lines 18 and 19 of the specification.

It is not understood how annular portions 126 and 128 of spool member 122 adapted to receive bolt 116 therethrough, can be construed as upset portions of a bolt. Clearly, Hardy, Jr., et al provides two separate members, i.e., a spool 122 having a pair of spaced annular flanges 126 and 128, and a bolt 116 received through such spool in lieu of a single member, i.e., a bolt having a pair of upset portions. The claimed invention clearly utilizes a single member to provide the function of two members which is an improvement and advantageous in terms of cost of manufacture, shipment and assembly, as previously indicated.

In the response to Applicant's previously submitted arguments, it is stated that Hardy, Jr., et al discloses a link comprising a bolt 112, 122 having a pair of upset portions 126, 128 spaced inwardly relative to the end portions, and no specific structure consisting of upset portions has been claimed. Applicant takes issue with such assertions in that reference numerals 112 and 122 do not denote a bolt but instead two separate elements, i.e., a bolt 112 and a spool 122 adapted to be fitted onto bolt 112.

Furthermore, Applicant takes issue with the assertion that no specific structure of the upset portions has been claimed, witness the fact that lines 3 and 4 of claim 1 clearly recite "a bolt having threaded end portions and a pair of upset portions spaced inwardly relative to said threaded end portions." Such recitation clearly recites specific structure of the upset portion of the bolt.

Each of claims 3 and 4 recites a washer insert molded in each of the inner grommets and engageable with an upset portion of the bolt when the inner grommet is mounted on the bolt. Claims 9 and 10 similarly provide that each of the outer grommets includes a washer insert mounted therein. None of the cited references and particularly Hardy, Jr., et al, discloses or teaches any such molded insert. With respect to Hardy, Jr., et al, neither of outer grommets 134 or 136 includes a molded washer insert. Inner grommets 138 and 140 also neither include any such washer. As understood, annular spool flanges 126 and 128 are construed as embedded insert washers, however, each of such annular spool flanges cannot be construed as both an upset portion of a bolt onto which a grommet is snap-fit and a molded insert washer. Nothing in the drawings or specification of Hardy, Jr., et al indicates that any of the inner or outer grommets of the link illustrated and described includes a washer molded therein. Spool flanges 126 and 128 are no such washers and although they are construed as upset portions of a bolt onto which inner grommets 138 and 140 snap-fit onto, they can in no manner be construed as washers embedded in outer grommets 134 and 136 which are spaced by spool 122 when the link is in the assembled condition as shown in Figure 3.

Each of claims 18 and 19 further recites each of the outer grommets including a bore for receiving the bolt therethrough, and the wall of such bore being provided with a protrusion engageable with the bolt extending through the bore, functional to permit the outer grommet to be temporarily frictionally held on an end of the bolt for shipping purposes. In the Office action, it is indicated that each of the outer grommets of Hardy, Jr., et al includes a bore for receiving the bolt 112 therethrough, and a wall of the bore being provided with a protrusion B engageable with the bolt extending through the bore functional to permit the outer grommet to be temporarily frictionally held on an end of the bolt for shipping purposes. Applicant fails to find any such protrusion described or illustrated in Hardy, Jr., et al. The reference B cited in the Office action is understood to consist of a lip portion of the sketch provided at the upper end of page 3 of the Office action. In this regard, it initially is submitted that the outer grommets of the Hardy, Jr., et al link assembly do not in fact provide any such inwardly projecting lip portions. As stated in column 5, lines 45 through 52, the larger end of each of the grommets is formed with a circular cavity providing an annular lip, similar to annular lip 144 shown in Figure 3, of a diameter that is slightly less than the outer diameter of the annular flanges 126 and 128 and the annular washers 130 and 132. Each of such annular lips projects longitudinally and not laterally relative to the axis of the bore through each grommet, as clearly seen in Figure 3. Secondly, even assuming that each of such

annular lips projects laterally inwardly, because of the radial distance of each of such lips from the axis of the bore through the grommet, such annular lips cannot reasonably be construed as protrusions provided on the walls of the bores in the grommets which are engageable with a bolt extending through such bores. Accordingly, it would not appear that Hardy, Jr., et al discloses or teaches any such protrusions as recited in such claims.

Claim 20, as amended, and correspondingly claims 26 through 27 by virtue of their dependency on claim 20 have been amended to recite each of the outer grommets being formed of a resilient material and having a washer insert molded therein (in lieu of being “mounted” therein). Accordingly, in addition to reciting each of the inner grommets having a groove in the bore permitting the inner grommet to be snap-fit onto an upset portion of the bolt with the upset portion being received in the groove when the inner grommet is mounted on the bolt with the bolt extending through the bore, each of such claims further recites each of the outer grommets having a washer insert molded therein with the body having a bore extending through the body and the washer. As previously indicated, each of inner grommets 138 and 140 of Hardy, Jr., et al is provided only with a cavity 142 for receiving an annular flange portion 128 or 126 of spacer spool 122 and not both a groove in the bore thereof permitting the inner grommet to be snap-fit onto an upset portion of the bolt and a separate washer insert molded in the body of the grommet. In essence, an annular flange 126 or 128 of spacer spool 122 cannot be construed both as an upset portion of a bolt extending through an inner grommet and a washer insert molded in the same inner grommet.

Each of claims 28 through 31 recites a grommet comprising a body formed of a resilient material having a bore for receiving a bolt therethrough, the wall of the bore having an annular groove allowing the body to be snap-fit onto an upset portion of the bolt when mounted thereon, and a rigid washer insert molded in the body disposed adjacent the groove and having an opening aligned with the bore. As previously indicated, neither of the inner grommets 134 and 140 of the link assembly illustrated and described in the Hardy, Jr., et al Patent provides for both such an annular groove allowing the body to be snap-fit onto an upset portion of the bolt, and a rigid washer insert molded in the body of the grommet. In the Office action, it is stated that such claims do not positively claim that the washer insert is located in the bore adjacent the groove, nor that the washer insert engages the upset portion of the bolt. In this regard, it is submitted that claim 28 and correspondingly 30 and 31 by virtue of their dependency on claim 28 specifically recite in lines 6 through 8 thereof “a rigid washer insert molded in said body disposed adjacent said groove and having an opening aligned with said bore.” With respect to the drawings of the subject application, the Examiner’s attention is invited to Figure 8 which illustrates a grommet having a body 40 provided with a bore 43, such bore having an annular recess 45 permitting the grommet to be snap-fit onto an upset portion 32 of an elongated bolt 23, and body 40 having a washer 44 insert molded therein adjacent annular opening 45. The Examiner’s attention further is invited to the first

full paragraph of page 5 of the specification of the subject application which describes in detail inner grommet 24 shown in Figure 8.

Claim 32 and claims 33 through 39 by virtue of their dependency on claim 32 each recite a grommet comprising a body formed of a resilient material having a bore for receiving a bolt therethrough, the wall of bore having an annular groove allowing the body to be snap-fit onto the annular flange portion of one of the nuts, and a rigid washer insert molded in the body disposed adjacent the groove and having an opening aligned with the bore. The body recited in such claim corresponds to the body 50 shown in Figure 8 and described in the specification of the subject application, the bore in the body corresponds to the bore 53, the annular groove allowing the body to be snap-fit onto the annular flange portion of one of the nuts corresponds to annular groove 55 and the rigid washer insert molded in the body adjacent such groove corresponds to washer 54. It is submitted that no such structure is provided in either of the outer grommets illustrated and described in a Hardy, Jr., et al. Referring to each of the outer grommets disclosed in Hardy, Jr., et al, it will be noted that there is simply provided a resilient body having an opening therethrough, an annular cavity formed on an outer side thereof and a washer 130 or a nut 120 having a flange portion 132 which is simply inserted in the annular cavity in the outer face of the grommet body by means of an interference fit. Although the outer grommet of Hardy, Jr., et al provides a nut with a flange that is interference fitted into an annular cavity in the outer face of the body thereof (which is not technically a snap-fit), it does not also provide a separate washer insert molded in the body of the grommet as recited in Applicant's claims.

Although in certain portions of the specification and claims of Hardy, Jr., et al the connections of inner grommets 138 and 140 to flange portions 126 and 128 of spool 122, and the connections of outer grommets 134 and 136 to washer 130 and flange portion 132 of nut 120 are referred to as snap-fits, such connections as described in the specification and disclosed less clearly in the drawings are in fact interference fits and not snap-fits. Snap-fits involve the deformation and subsequent restoration of a portion of a body in making a connection whereas an interference fit requires only the insertion of a body into a cavity having a configuration slightly smaller than the body being inserted. Accordingly, it would appear that the use of "snap-fit" in Hardy, Jr., et al is a misnomer.

It would appear significant to note that each of the assemblies disclosed in the prior art of record utilizes a cylindrical member as a spacer between a pair of grommets mounted on a bolt. Such design practice would appear to date back to 1977, the filing date of the earliest reference, and perhaps earlier. In this regard, it is submitted that Applicant's departure from such an arrangement in providing upset portions of the bolt for spacing the inner grommets apart is not only a substantial departure from the prior art but an improvement in reducing the number of components of such assemblies, reducing manufacturing and assembly costs and facilitating shipping and handling.

In view of the above remarks, it respectfully is requested that the rejection of Applicant's claims be withdrawn, such claims be allowed and further that the application be passed to issued.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any underpayment of fees or credit any overpayment of fees in connection with this communication to Deposit Account 19-4375.

Respectfully submitted,



Peter N. Lalos  
Registration No. 19,789  
STEVENS, DAVIS, MILLER & MOSHER, LLP  
1615 L Street, N.W., Suite 850  
Washington, D.C. 20036-5622

August 11, 2006  
PNL:cb  
202/785-0100